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MACLEAN'S GRAMMAR OF THE DIALECTS OF VERNACULAR SYRIAC.¹

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This grammar, which has now been before the public some three years or more, is beyond question the most valuable treatise upon the Syriac as spoken today which has yet appeared from any source. Designate the language as we may, "Modern Syriac," or "New Syriac," or more accurately and fittingly, as the "Vernacular Syriac," it quite deserves the attention given it by Semitic students since it first came to their notice some fifty years ago, for its almost singular survival as a spoken tongue out of the large family of Syriac languages. As a distinct advance on all previous studies of this vernacular Dean Maclean's grammar is very welcome, especially for the breadth of its survey and the fulness of its treatment of existing dialects.

The small *Grammar of the Modern Syriac Language* by the American missionary, David Tappan Stoddard, published by the American Oriental Society in its *Journal* in 1855 (Vol. V, pp. 1-180), was the first attempt to acquaint the world with the structure and grammatical peculiarities of this hitherto unknown tongue, and for long it was the only authority on the subject. This, however, was brought out before opportunity was had for any extended and thorough investigation of the language, especially as regards its numerous dialects. Stoddard's attention was confined chiefly to the dialect of Urumiah, where the American Mission Press was just beginning to develop a new Syriac literature. The urgent demands of missionary operations in those early days forbade the devoting much time to purely linguistic pursuits. A too short life for the brilliant young graduate of Yale doubtless deprived the world of riper studies which might reasonably have been expected of one who began so promisingly.

¹ GRAMMAR OF THE DIALECTS OF VERNACULAR SYRIAC, as spoken by the Eastern Syrians of Kurdistan, North-west Persia, and the plain of Mosul. With notices of the vernacular of the Jews of Azerbaijan, and of Zakhu, near Mosul. By Arthur John Maclean, M.A., F.R.G.S., Dean of Argyle and the Isles, sometime Head of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Eastern Syrians. Cambridge: *At the University Press*, 1895.

On the basis of this grammar of Stoddard's and publications of the Urumiah Press, the eminent Semitic scholar, Professor Nöldeke, prepared his *Grammatik der neusyrischen Sprache*, published in 1868. The sound philological principles applied here in the examination of the language threw much new scientific light upon it; yet even this scholarly work was not as complete as was to be desired, because the materials with which it dealt were drawn almost exclusively from the one dialect of Urumiah. The honor has fallen to Dean Maclean to make a really comprehensive study of the language and present a comparative view of all its dialects. The dean enjoyed exceptional advantages for such an undertaking during his five years' residence in Persia as the influential head of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Eastern Syrians, where it was my pleasure to know him as a genial acquaintance and indefatigable student. The field for investigation before him was a wide one. It is almost a Babel of dialects one meets in passing between Urumiah and the Tigris, presenting many difficult problems. But the dean brought to the task a scholarly relish for such pursuits, careful habits of observation, and a definite aim to harmonize the linguistic differences of the various tribes. Whether we agree with all his methods, and whether we accept all his conclusions, or contrariwise, it must be candidly admitted that he has brought the whole body of linguistic scholars under much obligation. That he has approached the study of the language from a different point of view from that taken by the American missionaries, and has advanced opinions somewhat at variance with theirs, will not be altogether regretted, even by them. Such investigations help to a better cultivation of the language among the Syriac-speaking peoples themselves, in itself a consideration of first importance. That Dean Maclean should speak of Stoddard's grammar as "chiefly useful for its list of the verbs used on the plain," when leading philologists for half a century past have acknowledged their great obligations to it, is, however, ungenerous, not to say unjust.

It may be of use here to point out the different aims of the American and Anglican scholars, as explaining the differing systems which they have developed in dealing with this vernacular Syriac. The early American laborers in the language, from whom oriental scholars got their first important knowledge of

it, in attempting to reduce it into shape for the creation of a new missionary literature, fully recognized the complexity of its dialects. They secured as their associates the best scholars then known in the Nestorian church, including representatives of other than the Urumiah dialect, to whose opinions they wisely showed much deference. By this united scholarship it was agreed that there was no way of blending in one all the variant dialects, but that some one dialect should be adopted as the standard, making it the vehicle of communication for all the nation. It was decided, further, that the Urumiah dialect, being the largest member of the family, as well as the simplest in form, and the most terse and forceful, was the one that promised best for their purpose. With Urumiah as the center of missionary and educational institutions, this form of the language would naturally secure the widest attention and hold among the people. In a certain degree these expectations have been realized. Readers in the Urumiah dialect number now many more than in all the others put together. Students from all sections of the nation have become thoroughly familiar with it through the American schools and books. It is by all odds the leading dialect in the vernacular Syriac today. Whether the American scholars should not have deferred more to the usage of other leading dialects in respect to vocabulary, verbal forms, and the more etymological writing of the language, where such usage was in closer conformity to the classical Old Syriac, is a question open to debate.

Stoddard and his colleagues were not indifferent to such important considerations. He writes in his grammar (p. 13): "Many words have a different sound from what they had formerly, and yet for the sake of etymology it is considered important to retain the original spelling. It is often a matter of much doubt how far we are permitted to go in defacing the escutcheon of words and obliterating all traces of their ancestry." Again he writes (p. 14): "As familiarity is acquired with the language spoken in all the dialects, reasons are often found for changing orthography which was supposed to be definitely settled." In certain matters Stoddard and his coadjutors in the language were probably more or less influenced by specimens still remaining of attempts by scholars on the plain of Mosul, two or three hundred years earlier, to write the vernacular of that dialect. The use of the *alap* instead of *he* as the final letter of the third person

singular of the preterite tense is doubtless an instance of this influence. Had the modern theory been in vogue then, that the origin of the vernacular Syriac is not to be sought in the written or classical Syriac, but in some other sister branch of the family, it is believed the founders of the American system would have broken away still further from the trammels of Old Syriac ancestry.

Turning now to the system adopted by Dean Maclean and his colleagues of the Anglican Mission, we discover quite a different aim. The dean says in his Introduction (p. xvii): "The method here adopted will not give the exact colloquial language of any one dialect; but it aims rather at producing a literary style which will make communication between the various districts easier." Of course, such a purpose must lead to quite different results from the one which shaped the American policy, and should be borne in mind in our examination of the dean's grammar. Any exhibition of the language on such lines will naturally render it less valuable as a text-book for the acquisition of the modern Syriac as it is actually spoken. Whether the effort to give the language a literary dress for general use will prove more successful than the attempt to elevate the leading dialect to such a position remains to be seen. It has not as yet received the indorsement of the American and French missionaries in their popular Syriac literatures. Both these bodies hold to the Urumiah dialect as their standard, though each exercises some independence in respect to orthography and vocabulary. The French system has decidedly improved of late years, rejecting many of its early crudities incident to its origin under the influence of the Salmas dialect; in fact, it has come to conform closely to the American system.

It is but fair to say that both have modified somewhat since Dean Maclean's studies have called attention to some needed etymological reconstructions. But the dean's extreme devotion to the etymologies has not carried with him, I think I am quite safe in averring, the sane judgment of the body of Syriac scholars on the ground. He contends that "the vernacular must be treated as a historical language, not as one invented in the present generation; in other words etymology must be considered" (Introd., p. xvi). This position is certainly at variance with the opinions held by the best modern philologists. A dozen years

ago Professor Nöldeke expressed to the writer his judgment that even the American missionaries had allowed etymology to play "somewhat too great a rôle." Dean Maclean's zeal for this principle, moreover, blinds him often to one of his own fundamental positions. He argues ably that the origin of the vernacular Syriac is not to be sought in the written or classical language, in which he has followed the leading Semitic scholars of the day. As he says: "Much or most of it [spoken Syriac] was doubtless in use side by side with the written classical Syriac for centuries" (Introd., p. xv). And he sums up the evidences in support of this statement as follows, in brief: "It retains in many cases forms less developed than corresponding forms in the written language. . . . The contractions in the tenses of the vernacular show independence of the written language. Many words are found in the former which are not used in the latter, but which are found in the Chaldee and other Aramaic dialects. So some of the compounds which are survivals of the construct state and some few remaining agents of the old form are formed from verbs not found even in the latest classical Syriac, though used now; this would show that these verbs were in use in speaking, though not in writing, before these now almost obsolete constructions were given up." After such emphasis on the independence of the vernacular and classical languages it is not a little surprising how the author labors insistently to demonstrate the intimate connection of the two. Almost every page of his grammar is significantly marked with the expression "= O. S.," and on such assumed etymological descent the birthright of N. S. words to a certain form of spelling is considered established. There is no disposition on our part to belittle the value of a scientific comparison of the two languages, nor the importance of some of Dean Maclean's studies along this line. But when he goes beyond the interesting search for historical relations, and lays down the rule that the spelling of the classical Syriac should be taken as the basis for spelling the vernacular (Introd., p. xvi), we contend that he has no ground for such a claim even on his own historical showing.

Again, our author's etymological principles run athwart one of the marked characteristics of the vernacular Syriac and so against sound philology. Every language must be dealt with in harmony with its own genius for development. Dean Maclean

has presented with much fulness the tendency of New Syriac to *simplification*. This he has done particularly in his valuable paper read before the International Congress held in London in 1892. He says, for example: "As the old past and future tenses have disappeared, the objective pronominal affixes have been greatly simplified, and even in the imperative, which remains, the affixes of O. S. are not used." "Generally the contractions in the tenses in the vernacular show independence of those of O. S." "A further simplification takes place in the conjugations." This contrast between the vernacular and the classical languages, showing the trend of the former toward simplification, is of much importance. But in Dean Maclean's efforts to reconstruct the vernacular on etymological lines he has too often lost sight of this principle.

With these general statements of what we conceive to be unsound philological processes in this grammar, we will present some practical illustrations of faulty methods and results.

VERBAL ROOTS.

In the first place we will consider the author's treatment of verbal roots.

We are struck here with the frequent use of silent letters. The *talqana* is very much in evidence. He seems to have reached a conclusion as to the O. S. origin of a verb, and then, to preserve to the eye the suggested pedigree, he inserts an unsounded letter with *talqana*. Too often the supposed genealogy is a doubtful one. But admitting its correctness, the procedure is without indorsement from sound philologists. One of them has remarked relative to this very case in hand: "Writing does not exist to embalm 'etymologies,' but to represent, as nearly as can be, pronunciation." The attempts in the seventeenth century, and perhaps earlier, to give written form to the *Alqosh* dialect may have followed, as Dean Maclean declares, "the baldest phonetic principles." But those courageous scholars were simply ahead of their times. They were anticipating the principles of the Spelling Reform Associations of England and America, and their work was in line with the general tendency of the vernacular Syriac to simplification.

Illustrations of the method we are criticising are found on pp. 98, 103, 310, 311. He speaks of verbs with a second or

final radical silent, and cites examples as follows (p. 98): ܐܠܐ, ܐܠܐ, ܐܠܐ, ܐܠܐ,² etc., deriving them from O. S. roots in which the *gamel* appears and is sounded. In the American and French systems this weak medial is represented by ܐ ('e) to support the second vowel, which is only dropped in pure colloquial speech, as it is even in such words as ܐܠܐ, ܐܠܐ, where the ܐ is historically correct. Perhaps ܐ would be a better support for the articulation of the vowel rather than ܐ, and either is preferable to ܐ. The latter compels the belief that an O. S. stem is the basis from which a *gamel* has disappeared, which may or may not be true.

There are a few verbs variously pronounced where it seems desirable to introduce a silent letter to render them more intelligible to readers in all dialects; thus ܐܠܐ in Urumiah is in Tiary ܐܠܐ. We write ܐܠܐ because the imperative has in Urumiah ܐܠܐ and in Kurdistan ܐܠܐ. But we have all gone farther, probably, than was necessary in preserving the root letters in all forms of the verb when not sounded. The ancient classical language is not bound by any such rule. In ܐ verbs it does not insert *nun* with *talqana* wherever it has become otiose, nor the *lamad* in those forms of ܐܠܐ in which that letter is assimilated. Such precedents certainly justify considerable liberty in writing the vernacular, still in its formative literary stage of development. Quite rightly Dean Maclean now writes the N. S. verb ܐܠܐ without the *lamad* formerly inserted to show its connection with O. S. ܐܠܐ. But in one instance he rules out of the vernacular one valuable verb altogether, ܐܠܐ "to enter," because he has found no origin for it. So he makes ܐܠܐ (O. S. ܐܠܐ "to pass by") serve in the two senses, "to pass by" and "to enter," which is a great loss to the language. ܐܠܐ ܐܠܐ may mean "they passed the house," or "they entered the house."

A conspicuous feature in Dean Maclean's treatment of the verb is his use of the preformative *mim* in verbs of the second conjugation. The use or omission of this *mim* practically separates the Nestorian tribes into two grand divisions, which we may in general terms denominate as the northern and the southern families, the dialect of Urumiah affiliating most closely with the northern group.

² In Maclean's system the *g* in these words is written with *talqana* to indicate that it is silent; our types do not permit us to reproduce this peculiarity.

Dean Maclean writes the *mim* with *talqana* when the verb is written for Urumiah use, otherwise without. As it is wholly foreign to the usage of the northern dialects, the American and French presses do not recognize it. Were we to adopt it, we should be forced into the incongruous necessity of attaching this unpronounced sign to words never used outside of the northern division, some of them coming from foreign languages, simply to maintain good grammatical form, as Dean Maclean does repeatedly.

VERBAL FORMS AND DERIVATIVES.

We turn now to discuss our author's treatment of verbal forms and derivatives.

His analysis of the verb corresponds with that given by Professor Nöldeke. He, of course, accepts the latter's derivation of the preterite tense from the old past participle, to which pronominal affixes are added with a uniting Δ , its strictly passive force being inverted into an active one, precisely similar constructions appearing in O. S. Thus Δ ܐܠܗܝܡܐ strictly rendered signifies "killed by me was that man," but in the vernacular it is the simple direct form for "I killed that man." We have an analogous form in somewhat frequent use: Δ ܐܠܗܝܡܐ = "it was finished by me" = "I finished."

But we see no reason for separating the participle and the suffixes as Dean Maclean does. They are spoken as in the closest union, and should be so written; thus Δ ܐܠܗܝܡܐ instead of Δ ܐܠܗܝܡܐ . In verbs with final *lamad*, *nun*, or *resh* the connecting *lamad* is by rule always dropped and the pronoun joins directly to the stem; thus we have Δ ܐܠܗܝܡܐ , Δ ܐܠܗܝܡܐ . And all verbs ought to be treated in the same way in the interests of simplicity and uniformity.

Some would carry the simplification still farther and drop the *yud khwasa* from the stem, substituting for it short *zlama*, thus Δ ܐܠܗܝܡܐ for Δ ܐܠܗܝܡܐ . This abbreviation is in use in the Alqosh, American, and French systems. In favor of writing with the Δ is the fact that it occurs in other forms and words where it is pronounced the same as short *zlama*, noticeably in the feminine form of the passive participle and the tense compounded with it, and also in the feminine of numerous adjectives. Thus we have Δ ܐܠܗܝܡܐ *m.*, Δ ܐܠܗܝܡܐ *f.* "cut," Δ ܐܠܗܝܡܐ *m.*, Δ ܐܠܗܝܡܐ *f.* "pleasant." In a

closed syllable it has the same sound as ـ , which is usually that of î . But Dean Maclean makes a surprising error when he affirms that it *uniformly* has this sound (pp. 9, 11, 85). He is particular to state that the sound of the *khwasa* is not modified even by the letters *qof*, *tait*, and *'e*. Our experience of nearly forty years in hearing and speaking the vernacular Syriac is contrary to this assertion. Not only the letters cited, but also *kheit* and *resh*, almost invariably modify the sound of the ـ . There is an unmistakable difference in the pronunciation of this vowel in ܩܘܦܐ and in ܩܘܦܐܝܬܐ , ܬܐܝܬܐ , ܥܐܝܬܐ . In the first word it has the sound of î , in the others of i in bird, nearly. In combination with *resh* it has the sound of e in pet, as in ܦܝܬܐ .

There is still another argument of some force in favor of writing the ـ in this preterite tense. When the objective pronouns are written into the verb the *yud* must be written, as the syllable becomes open and the sound is that of î . We write ܬܝܬܐܝܬܐ "he took me," for ܬܐܝܬܐ . For the sake, therefore, of writing the verb uniformly in its analogous forms, and with no violation of the principles of vowel sounds, we approve Dean Maclean's method of writing the preterite tense.

It seems desirable to say a few words on the substitution of σ for î in the third person singular of this tense and in the present tense of the substantive verb, to which the dean gives his unquestioning support. It is important to notice that the *alap* is written here in the old Alqosh manuscripts, so often here referred to, in all the carefully transcribed specimens of the present day language prepared by Professor Sachau during his intercourse with the Syrians in and around Mosul, and in all the literature of the different missionary bodies except the one represented by Dean Maclean. It seems to have been thought that the *alap* best represented the absence here of sound apart from the simple articulation of the vowel. Though our author makes no apology or explanation for the form which he adopts in the face of so many learned writers of the language who have preceded him, he doubtless bases it upon his grammatical principles. He makes, however, the general statement that final σ is silent (pp. 7, 317). This is undoubtedly correct. There can, therefore, be no objection on phonetic principles in writing the σ instead of î , and since it exhibits the etymology at once, there is sufficient reason for so spelling the syllable. The final syllables

in the two words ܐܢܝܢ ܐܢܝܢ are pronounced exactly alike, and why should they not be written alike in representation of the same pronoun? The only objection we can conceive of, apart from a half century of contrary practice, is the possible confusion when the same form of the verb requires a pronominal suffix in the third person objective case. Thus ܐܢܝܢܐܝܢ may mean "he commanded," or he "commanded him," the latter form being quite frequent. But the objection is not a very serious one.

COMPOUND WORDS.

In Dean Maclean's exhibition of compound words we discover the same disposition, already remarked upon in his treatment of verbs and their derivatives, to a too slavish adherence to the principles of the classical language, at variance with the tendency of the vernacular to a more free development and greater simplicity. For example, in the word which he gives as ܐܬܝܢܐܝܢ "supper," which is pronounced as if written ܐܬܝܢܐܝܢ, and which has so been spelled hitherto. It is possible that the etymology of the word is correctly indicated by the dean, from ܐܬܝܢ "to eat," and ܐܬܝܢ "evening," but what need to parade this learning outside of the dictionary? So in the surviving instances of the construct case, why not write them simply as a single word instead of dividing them into two, with sundry silent letters to remind the reader of a possible ancestry? So we should write ܐܬܝܢܐܝܢ for ܐܬܝܢ ܐܬܝܢ "spider's web," ܐܬܝܢܐܝܢ for ܐܬܝܢ ܐܬܝܢ "butterfly," ܐܬܝܢܐܝܢ for ܐܬܝܢ ܐܬܝܢ "ivory." When the pronunciation seems to demand it, the two parts may be written separately, as ܐܬܝܢ ܐܬܝܢ "rainbow," ܐܬܝܢܐܝܢ "holy of holies." On the same principle omit the silent letters in such compounds as ܐܬܝܢ "a few," ܐܬܝܢܐܝܢ "several," ܐܬܝܢܐܝܢ (or write ܐܬܝܢܐܝܢ) "then," ܐܬܝܢܐܝܢ "Sunday," ܐܬܝܢܐܝܢ "Tuesday," ܐܬܝܢܐܝܢ "morning." The classical language furnishes numerous instances of the composition of words on this principle, as ܐܬܝܢܐܝܢ for ܐܬܝܢ ܐܬܝܢ "human" (see Duval, *Grammaire Syriacque*, p. 243, for other similar formations). Who would insist that we ought to amend the old Syriac spelling in order to more exactly exhibit the etymology of such words?

We cannot refrain here from calling attention to one rather amusing error of our author's along this line, which we are sure he must himself have already discovered. It occurs in §16, *g*. Among his specimens of the surviving construct case phrases he gives

ܒܬܬܝܬܐ “bat.” But this is a pure Turkish compound, Turkish in both its component parts, and the ܬ is wholly a fancy of the etymology hunter. It is not the only instance in which the dean’s unfamiliarity with the other languages of the country has been a disadvantage to his work. On p. 249 he raises the question whether the ܬ in ܬܬܝܬܐ and ܬܬܝܬܐ is radical or not, when both words have come into the language from the Turkish in precisely their present full form. On p. 249 the Persian ܬܬܝܬܐ is primarily “armlet,” and secondarily “amulet.” ܬܬܝܬܐ in Persian is “arm,” not “calf,” as this grammar states. Again, it will hardly do to designate the Arabic and Turkish adjectives ܬܬܝܬܐ, ܬܬܝܬܐ, ܬܬܝܬܐ as Syriac “impersonal verbs” as our author does (p. 151, 3) and “thus conjugated.” Their use is exactly what it is in their original tongues and in Persian, either as adjectives with the substantive verb, which latter is often elided (as ܬܬܝܬܐ ܬܬܝܬܐ for ܬܬܝܬܐ ܬܬܝܬܐ, “it is necessary he come”), and sometimes as nouns with pronominal affixes (see p. 55), but in no sense can they be called verbs. We have never heard the plural form of any of these words used as is stated in this paragraph; the author has evidently confounded the sound of the first-personal pronoun ending with the plural ending.

There are some matters relating to Dean Maclean’s exhibition of the verbs which we have reserved from the preceding discussion for separate consideration. His classification of the regular verbs into two principal conjugations is the same as that adopted by his predecessors. Outside of these fall the causatives and the quadriliterals. A better classification would seem³ to be to recognize three conjugations, viz., the simple, derived from the primitive *Pe’al*, and corresponding to it in meaning generally; the intensive, from the primitive *Pa’el*; and the causative, from the ancient *Aph’el*. Thus:

- I. ܦܬܝܬܐ, ܦܬܝܬܐ, ܦܬܝܬܐ (intrans.), “to go out.”
- II. ܦܬܝܬܐ, ܦܬܝܬܐ, ܦܬܝܬܐ (ܦܬܝܬܐ, ܦܬܝܬܐ, ܦܬܝܬܐ), “to put out.”
- III. ܦܬܝܬܐ, ܦܬܝܬܐ, ܦܬܝܬܐ, “to cause to get out.”

Of course, not every root has all these forms, though theoretically all may have them, and practically many do, and there is much advantage in presenting them in such scientific relation.

³This suggestion is advocated by Rev. W. A. Shedd, missionary at Urumiah, who has made a special and scientific study of the language for seven years.

The quadriliteral verbs in general fall into the second conjugation, a few come under the first.

In his arrangement of tenses Dean Maclean places at the head **فَعَّلَ**, calling it the "first present." As presenting the stem root of the verb, it deserves a foremost position in any classification, but its claim to be called "first present" is apparently only the fact that it is derived from the present participle of the primitive verb. With the proper prefixes it is either a future, past, or historic present. Without them it is used either in a dependent sense in connection with some other verb, or in the second and third persons as an imperative. In every particular it conforms to the usage of the optative or subjunctive in Turkish and Persian.

A readily intelligible comprehension of the verb conjugation is much embarrassed by the absence of any full paradigm of the several tenses. A complete paradigm of the whole verb on the basis of the fragmentary ones given on pp. 93, 94, showing first the standard form, as advocated by the author, and then comparative forms from the more important dialects, would have greatly contributed to the value of the work as a text-book. This lack is even more impatiently felt in a study of the irregular verbs. This is a field of great confusion at best, and the author has not facilitated the student in mastering the intricacies as he should have done. He simply presents a bewildering mass of material, out of which the student must pick the order of the particular colloquial he may be investigating. The treatment of the substantive verb is especially unsatisfactory, wholly inadequate for the wants of any but expert Semitic students. Two tenses are exhibited on p. 74, while the verb from which they are in part supposed to have come, and which supplies all the other tenses, is noticed in a single paragraph among the irregular verbs, p. 123.

A surprising statement is made on p. 76, to the effect that the imperative of the substantive verb is not very much used in the sense "to be." Can the author so soon have forgotten the constantly recurring usage of the schoolroom at least, **هَيَّاهُ** **هَيَّاهُ** "be quick," **هَيَّاهُ** **هَيَّاهُ** "be sensible" = "behave," **هَيَّاهُ** **هَيَّاهُ** or **هَيَّاهُ** **هَيَّاهُ** "be careful," **هَيَّاهُ** **هَيَّاهُ** "be quiet," **هَيَّاهُ** **هَيَّاهُ** "be ready," etc., etc.

There are quite a number of other points in this grammar where our observation and judgment are at variance with the author's. We should like to indicate some etymologies to which

exception might fairly be taken, and some definitions incorrectly given, as well as some statements in grammar, of lesser importance, to be sure, but which we regard as misleading; but our article has already trespassed on the courtesy of this JOURNAL's pages. We will, therefore, sum up in a few concluding words.

The author seems to have had four principal ends in view in the preparation of his grammar. 1) To present to foreign scholars a more extended survey of the vernacular Syriac. 2) To elucidate the historic relations of the language. 3) To elaborate a "literary style" which shall serve as a bond of union between the different dialects of the Syrians. 4) To aid practical students of the language in their acquisition of it.

On the first of these points we must concede to Dean Maclean a large measure of success. He certainly has given an exhaustive survey of the language which leaves little to be desired—at once a boon to Semitic scholarship and an honor to his industrious researches. He has also done some valuable work in developing the historic aspects of this interesting relic of a once great family of spoken Syriac. At the same time we believe that with a wider scientific training, and with a firmer curb on his "O. S." enthusiasm, he would have reached results more in accord with the consensus of philological opinion. On the third point, it seems quite doubtful if the dean's "literary style" will ever become popular among the Syriac-speaking peoples. There is no evidence now of any general disposition to accept it. As to the adaptation of the grammar for use among practical students of the language we must, again, speak qualifiedly. The author has sacrificed too much to his exhibition of the usage of dialectal peculiarities to make it an easy text-book for ordinary students. It also is lacking in systematic and helpful arrangement. But then we must bear in mind that he could not be expected to develop all his aims alike well, and that he stated in his Introduction that his method was not designed to give an exact knowledge of any one colloquial dialect.⁴

⁴ P. xvii.